sonar21.com

The Road to War in Ukraine — The History of NATO and US Military Exercises With Ukraine — Part 1

()x

14–17 minutes

NATO Maritime Exercise — Sea Breeze

This is the first of a three-part series on the history of NATO and US European Command military exercises with Ukraine. This shows how the West, acting like a camel, slipped its big nose under the Ukrainian tent as part of a long-term strategy to defeat Russia. While many of these exercises were touted as *peacekeeping* in nature, the real purpose was to train and equip Ukraine with the ultimate goal of fighting and defeating Russia. In July 1998, for example, NATO's ***Sea Breeze*** maritime exercise included *anti-submarine warfare*. WTF??? That ain't peacekeeping. That is

preparation to fight Russia in the Black Sea.

The process of making Ukraine a de facto member of NATO started in 1992, one year after the collapse of the Soviet Union. 1994 marked the first year that Ukrainian forces participated in NATO exercises, although these were held in Poland and the Netherlands. The following year, 1995, witnessed the creation of Ukraine's Yavoriv military base as the NATO training center, although this was not formalized until 1999.

1999 was no coincidence… it was the year that NATO expanded to the East by accepting the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland as new members on March 12, 1999. This provoked alarm in Russia because it obliterated the promise of former US Secretary of State James Baker, that NATO would not move one inch to the East. President Bill Clinton broke that promise.

Part 2 will cover the period, 2000 – 2010. Part 3 will cover 2011 – 2021. The plan to use Ukraine as a proxy to weaken Russia was born in the 1990s and matured into war in 2022. I hope you find this informative.

I did a podcast today with Garland Nixon. That is posted at the end of this article.

1992

NATO-Ukraine Relations in 1992 — In 1992, Ukraine formally established relations with NATO by joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in March 1992. The North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was established by NATO in December 1991 as a forum for dialogue and cooperation between NATO member states and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact states, in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War.

The NACC ostensibly was created to foster political consultation and build confidence between former adversaries, reflecting NATO's "hand of friendship" to the newly independent and transitioning states of Central and Eastern Europe, which also included Russia. The NACC's activities paved the way for deeper cooperation, notably leading to the launch of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 1994, which allowed for more

practical and individualized cooperation between NATO and partner countries.

In 1997, the NACC was succeeded by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which expanded the partnership framework to include more countries and provided a more sophisticated forum for dialogue and cooperation, reflecting the evolving security environment and the deepening relationships between NATO and its partners. Russia also joined EAPC, but was suspended from the organization in 2014 after the people of Crimea voted to reunite with Russia.

- Ukraine's cooperation with NATO began in March 1992 when it joined the newly established NACC, marking the start of formal relations and opening the door for future military cooperation .
- The first concrete participation of Ukraine in a NATO-linked military exercise did not occur until September 1994, when Ukraine joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and participated in joint training exercises such as "Cooperation Bridge" in Poland .

1993

In 1993, Ukraine began its military cooperation with the United States and NATO, although it had not yet joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (which happened in 1994). The most significant development in 1993 was the initiation of the U.S.-Ukraine State Partnership Program (SPP), established between the California National Guard and Ukraine. This program laid the groundwork for ongoing joint training, military exchanges, and exercises.

The U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) advocated for establishing a Military Liaison Team (MLT) in Kyiv as early as 1993, but the deployment was delayed due to diplomatic considerations. Nonetheless, military cooperation and engagement activities were ongoing under the Defense Attaché Office. The cooperation in 1993 set the stage for more formal and larger-scale military exercises such as "Peace Shield" and "Sea Breeze," which began after Ukraine joined the Partnership for Peace in 1994.

1994

Cooperative Bridge 94

- In September 1994, Ukraine participated in its first NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) joint training exercise,
  “Cooperative Bridge 94,” held at the Biedrusko military training area near Poznan, Poland, from 12 to 16 September 1994 .
- This exercise involved approximately 600 soldiers from 13 NATO and Partner nations, including Ukraine, and focused on basic unit and individual peacekeeping tasks and skills.
- The aim was to share peacekeeping experience, develop a common understanding of operational procedures, and improve interoperability among NATO and Partner military forces .
- The exercise was conducted under the supervision of NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and was jointly planned with Polish military authorities.

Spirit of Partnership

Later in 1994, a Ukrainian air-mobile unit participated in another PfP training exercise called “Spirit of Partnership,” held in the Netherlands.

1995

Peace Shield 1995:

The primary NATO/USEUCOM military exercise conducted with Ukraine in 1995 was “Peace Shield,” a joint US-Ukrainian exercise held at the **Yavoriv** training area near Lviv from May 23 to May 27, 1995. This exercise was part of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which aimed to increase interoperability and cooperation between NATO and partner countries, including Ukraine.

Autumn Allies 95:
Another notable exercise was “Autumn Allies 95,” which involved approximately 400 U.S. Marines and 200 Ukrainian soldiers. The exercise focused on promoting interoperability in peacekeeping operations and was conducted later in 1995.

The Partnership for Peace program was central to these activities, providing a framework for joint exercises, training, and defense planning between Ukraine, NATO, and USEUCOM.

1996

Cossack Step-96:

In 1996, Ukraine hosted a military exercise called “Cossack Step-96” in cooperation with Great Britain. This exercise was conducted “in the spirit of Partnership for Peace (PfP),” NATO’s program for building trust and interoperability with non-member countries, including Ukraine at the time. The exercise involved approximately 140 participants from Ukraine and Great Britain.

During this period, Ukraine was actively increasing its military cooperation with NATO through the PfP framework, which included joint training and exercises aimed at enhancing Ukraine’s ability to participate in multinational operations with NATO forces. The U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) was involved in
developing security cooperation with Ukraine, focusing on familiarization activities, military professionalism, and closer ties to NATO.

1997

Cooperative Neighbor-97:

In July 1997, Ukraine hosted the Cooperative Neighbor-97 joint exercise at the Yavoriv training grounds in western Ukraine. The exercise involved approximately 1,200 soldiers from the United States, Greece, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Macedonia. Cooperative Neighbor-97 was conducted under NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which aimed to build trust and interoperability between NATO members and partner countries. The exercise focused on joint training and cooperation, and was observed by U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen and Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksandr Kuzmuk.

Sea Breeze 1997:

Sea Breeze 1997 was a multinational maritime exercise cohosted by the United States and Ukraine in the Black Sea region. The exercise included U.S. Marines and Ukrainian forces and was initially planned to simulate an intervention in a fictional ethnic conflict, but the scenario was changed due to Russian sensitivities. The revised scenario focused on providing humanitarian aid after an earthquake. The land-based segments were moved from Crimea to the Ukrainian mainland to avoid local protests and Russian opposition. While conducted "in the spirit of NATO's Partnership for Peace," NATO itself maintained a hands-off approach, with only Turkey among NATO members sending ships to participate directly.

Significance:

Both exercises were part of the broader NATO-Ukraine cooperation established by the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, signed in July 1997, which set the framework for ongoing military and political collaboration. These exercises marked early steps in Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic security structures and were designed to enhance interoperability, readiness, and mutual understanding between Ukraine, NATO, and U.S. European Command forces.

1998

Cossack Express 1998 (May 1998)

- **Location:** Ukraine (multiple sites).
- **Participants:** Ukraine, U.S., and other PfP nations.
- **Focus:** Disaster response, humanitarian aid, and crisis management.
- **Significance:** Aimed at improving civil-military coordination in emergencies.

Peace Shield 1998 (June 1998)

- **Location:** Yavoriv Training Area, Ukraine (near Lviv).
- **Participants:** Ukraine, U.S., and other Partnership for Peace (PfP) nations.
- **Focus:** Command post exercise (CPX) focused on peacekeeping operations, crisis response, and interoperability with NATO standards.
- **Significance:** Part of the **“Peace Shield”** series, which began in 1995 to prepare Ukrainian forces for potential NATO-led peacekeeping missions.

Sea Breeze 1998 (July 1998)

- **Location:** Black Sea (near Odesa, Ukraine)
- **Participants:** Ukraine, the U.S., and other NATO partners.
- **Focus:** Maritime security, search and rescue (SAR), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and naval interoperability.
- **Significance:** Part of the annual **“Sea Breeze”** series (started in 1997), enhancing Ukraine’s cooperation with NATO in Black Sea operations.

Cooperative Nugget 1998 (September 1998)

- **Location:** Hohenfels Training Area, Germany (part of the **Cooperative Partner** series).
- **Participants:** Ukraine, U.S., and other NATO/PfP countries.
- **Focus:** Peacekeeping operations, joint command structures, and multinational coordination.

- **Significance:** Helped Ukrainian forces train alongside NATO troops in a simulated UN/NATO-style peacekeeping mission.

The U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and other U.S. military entities were actively engaged in planning and executing military-to-military contacts and exercises with Ukraine in 1998, focusing on familiarization, confidence building, and demonstrating U.S. commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty . The annual planners' conference for military contacts was held in April 1998 in Stuttgart, Germany, to develop the 1999 plan, indicating ongoing and planned engagement. The transition of responsibility for U.S. military engagement in Ukraine from the Joint Staff to USEUCOM was underway in 1998, further institutionalizing these activities. The establishment of a Regional Training Centre at the Yavoriv training area in Ukraine was discussed as a future initiative for multinational training and exercises.

1999

Peace Shield 99 (May 1999)

- **Location:** Yavoriv Training Area, Ukraine (near Lviv)
- **Participants:** Ukraine, NATO members (including the U.S.), and Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries.
- **Focus:** Command post exercise (CPX) focused on **peacekeeping operations**, interoperability, and crisis response.
- **Significance:** One of Ukraine's major annual multinational exercises under the PfP framework.

Cooperative Partner 99 (June–July 1999)

- **Location:** Ukraine (Odesa and Myrhorod regions)
- **Participants:** Ukraine, U.S. (USEUCOM), and other NATO/PfP nations.
- **Focus: Maritime and air operations**, including search and rescue (SAR), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and naval interoperability.
- **Significance:** Part of the **Cooperative Partner** series, enhancing Black Sea security cooperation.

Sea Breeze 99 (July–August 1999)

- **Location:** Black Sea (Odesa and Crimea)
- **Participants:** Ukraine, U.S. Navy (6th Fleet), NATO allies (including Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria), and PfP countries.
- **Focus: Maritime security, amphibious operations, and crisis response**.
- **Significance:** Part of the annual **Sea Breeze** series, which began in 1997 and continues today.

Cossack Express-99 (September 1999):

Held at the Yavoriv training grounds in Ukraine starting September 18, 1999, this NATO-sponsored exercise involved British and Ukrainian motorized infantry units of battalionsize. The exercise focused on rehearsing joint actions in UN authorized peacekeeping operations under NATO command, modeled after operations in the Balkans.

Cossack Steppe-99:

Conducted at the Nowa Deba training range in Poland beginning September 20, 1999, this exercise included company-sized motorized infantry units from Ukraine, Poland (a new NATO member at the time), and Britain. It also rehearsed joint peacekeeping operations under NATO command, with participation from the Ukrainian-Polish joint battalion.

Black Sea Partnership-99:

From September 20–25, 1999, the Ukrainian navy's flagship *Hetman Sahaydachny* participated alongside NATO and partner country warships in this exercise, which was held mostly in Turkish waters. The aim was to practice joint naval operations and naval support for NATO-led peacekeeping operations on land.

CONCLUSION:

I spent 23 years scripting military exercises for US Special Forces. While I was not involved in the scripting of any of these NATO/US military exercises, I understand the purpose and process of them. These were not

harmless games. They were designed to train and equip the Ukrainian military to fight Russia, potentially with NATO's direct involvement. We have seen that come to fruition since the start of the Special Military Operation in 2022. It is no coincidence that Russia hit the Yavoriv NATO military facility on March 13, 2022.

I thank you for your invaluable support by taking time to read or comment. I do not charge a subscription fee nor do I accept advertising. I want the content to be accessible to everyone interested in the issues I am discussing. However, if you wish to make a donation, please *see this link*.